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IF UNITA RULED ANGOLA

June 15, 1986

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IF UNITA RULED ANGOLA

KEY JUDGMENTS

It is unlikely that there will be a military victory by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in the near future. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government is well protected by Cuban troops and Soviet military support, while UNITA has an inferior military capability.

It is unlikely that the MPLA will agree to a national unity government with UNITA. However, if a national unity government were to come into existence, it is unlikely that UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi would concede power to anyone else. A UNITA government would imply a Savimbi leadership.

Any attempt by UNITA to rule Angola to the exclusion of the MPLA would probably reverse their present roles. The MPLA would become a dissident movement with continued but reduced Soviet military support, and UNITA would need the military support of an external power, just as the MPLA currently has Cuban support.

Hostility on the part of a growing segment of the population toward the Cuban troops and the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the MPLA regime have increased support for UNITA, transforming the movement into a more national movement rather than a tribal one. One reason for MPLA-directed hostility is the MPLA's official party line, which calls for propagating atheism as expressed by Marxist-Leninist theory, a concept which alienates the growing number of Angolan Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Although Savimbi's reliance on South Africa has undermined his nationalist credentials with outsiders, UNITA suffers little from the taint inside Angola, especially among the Ovimbundu, who resent their underrepresentation in positions of power within the MPLA government.

Jonas Savimbi will probably not abandon his goal of a Socialist state. Since 1975, he has espoused the African Socialist ideology preached by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere in place of the more rigorous Maoist ideology he adhered to in UNITA's early days.

A UNITA government would inherit the severe economic problems now facing the MPLA government. But, with immediate and long-term Western economic aid and the probable reopening of the Benguela Railroad, it is likely that Angola would have an improved economic situation under a UNITA government.

The political, ideological, and military structures which now exist in UNITA-controlled areas would probably remain basically intact. UNITA already functions as a state-within-a-state with a complete, multilevel administrative network.

A UNITA government would be supported by a large number of African countries which fear the spread of communism in southern Africa and the continent as a whole. As long as Savimbi maintained only discreet ties with South Africa, he would probably eventually gain the support of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

On the international level, a UNITA government would be supported militarily, economically, and diplomatically by the West. It would also have the support of conservative groups all over the world.

CONTENTS

	Page
BACKGROUND	1
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IDEOLOGY	1
POLITICAL STRUCTURE	3
LEADERSHIP	3
MILITARY	4
INTERNAL SECURITY	5
FOREIGN SUPPORT AND POLICY	6
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES	7

DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND

1. The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the third liberation movement formed to fight against the Portuguese colonial government, was proclaimed on 13 March 1966. UNITA's founding members, led by Jonas Savimbi, were a small breakaway faction from one of two other liberation movements, the Popular Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA).
2. The third movement, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), invited Savimbi to join its organization as a rank-and-file member shortly after UNITA's inception, but Savimbi insisted on an immediate position on the top MPLA policymaking body, the National Steering Committee. When this position was denied, he moved his organization into the bush, mobilizing people and organizing communities of resistance to Portuguese rule, carrying out literacy programs, health care programs, and agricultural collectivization. By the early 1970s, with Chinese help, Savimbi had a bush insurgency rivaling the Marxist MPLA and the Western-supported FNLA.
3. All three liberation movements had a tribal basis; the largest group, the Ovimbundu, supported its native son, Savimbi. Following the April 1974 military coup in Portugal, which brought to power a new regime willing to withdraw its colonial claims in Angola, a January 1975 agreement established a provisional government consisting of the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA, and set conditions for general elections. The almost immediate collapse of the provisional government was followed by a civil war between the three groups which ended in 1976, when the Soviet- and Cuban-supported MPLA succeeded in gaining full control of the national government. The FNLA was forced to retreat into Zaire, continuing to exist today as a small and basically ineffectual threat to the MPLA government.
4. UNITA, in contrast, although forced to flee to the south, received weapons from France, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Zaire, and several other black African states which were alarmed at Soviet designs on central Africa. By the end of 1979, South Africa had begun to support UNITA, and by 1981, UNITA had become strong enough to assume the offensive against the MPLA government.
5. Today, UNITA is a self-reliant organization which controls one-third of Angola and appears to have the support of most of the Ovimbundu. With South African military support, which Savimbi claims is minimal, UNITA has the capability to launch extensive attacks against government forces, and, likewise, to repel government attacks on UNITA-held territory.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IDEOLOGY

6. UNITA's political and economic ideology is ill defined, somewhat rhetorical, and sometimes contradictory, partly because Savimbi often tailors his public pronouncements to suit his audience, saying one thing on his home turf and another when abroad, or modifying policies over time. For example, UNITA's coat-of-arms displays the words "Socialism, Negritude, Democracy, and Nonalignment." Yet, when in the West, to reassure his supporters, Savimbi avoids the term "socialism." While negritude may be intended for home

consumption, when Savimbi is abroad, he plays down this aspect. Likewise, Savimbi's commitment to a multiparty democracy or some form of powersharing is tenuous at best. And, after years of combat against Cuban troops and Soviet advisers, it is unthinkable that UNITA would treat the East equally with the West.

7. UNITA's policy statements over the last few years illustrate its contradictory policies. In the December 1983 publication, "The Angola Road to National Recovery," a set of guidelines for UNITA's economic planning, a Socialist orientation is clearly favored. The guidelines recommend a strong government role in the economy, state ownership of a large proportion of the means of production, state planning, and a leading role for the state in mobilizing investments. The guidelines also suggest a subordinate and subsidized private sector in which private firms would operate within a predominantly Socialist-oriented economy.

8. And yet 11 months later, during the November 1984 Congress, new guidelines indicated a shift away from socialism. UNITA pledged to decentralize its administration and condemned the MPLA aldeamento system, which is equated with Nyerere's ujamaa (collective village). UNITA's leaders also specified that only the first 4 years of education would be free, and that a small fee would be required for medical treatment. In short, the Congress moved toward an espousal of a decentralized, mixed economy, with few promises of a welfare state.

9. Nevertheless, UNITA's practiced policies in the liberated areas fit into the model of village collectivism practiced in all of Africa's Marxist-Leninist states. Under these policies, the peasants must turn over part of their crops to UNITA in return for protection from MPLA troops and access to UNITA's socialized medical system and politically controlled schools. This system, which is highly organized and an integral part of UNITA's daily functioning, is a direct result of Savimbi's years of extensive study in China in the mid-1960s, during which he adopted the Maoist principle of the guerrilla "being one with the people." Thus, contradictions in UNITA's stated and practiced policies suggest that it is unlikely that Savimbi has undergone a genuine ideological conversion in recent years, in spite of statements during his visit to the United States in February 1986 in support of free enterprise and a multiparty democratic Angola.

10. In regard to economics, Savimbi's public pronouncements contain anti-Soviet, pro-Capitalist rhetoric which suggest that he would create a mixed economy. UNITA's National Committee defines a mixed economy as a concentration in the agricultural sector in which there would be a guarantee of private initiative with the minimum necessary intervention by the state. At first, according to National Committee guidelines, national industrial priorities would focus on selected consumer goods, implying movement away from reliance on imports financed by oil, diamonds, and coffee. Presumably, the reopening of the Benguela Railroad would facilitate the transportation of goods to and from the interior.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

11. A governing UNITA political structure would probably be almost identical to the existing one, which is based on the principle of democratic centralism. On the national level, it consists of an elected Executive Committee with 12 permanent and 5 acting members and a 50-member National Committee. On the local level, there are village (kimbo), district, and regional committees. The organization's political cycle revolves around annual conferences and 4-year national congresses attended by elected representatives from all the kimbos under UNITA control. During the National Congress, party policy and military strategy are formulated, and the president, secretary general, permanent secretary, chief of staff, the members of the Executive Committee and National Committee are elected. The post of president, held by Savimbi since UNITA's inception, is the highest authority in the party; the president is also commander in chief of the Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FALA), and chairman of the National Committee.

12. At the regional level, the political interests and affairs of UNITA's 22 military regions are the responsibility of political commissars appointed by the president. The commissars act as the link between the village and district committees on a regional level, and the Executive and National Committees at the national level.

13. There would probably be a few notable modifications of the political structure under a UNITA government. Early on, while UNITA was establishing a power base and firm security structure, the democratic ideals which appear in current UNITA literature, including the participation of citizens on both national and local levels and the holding of elections for many political positions, would be likely to be upheld. But as the fledgling government grew in need of a more potent means of quelling the inevitable opposition from segments of the population which would retain their loyalty to the former government or to other insurgent groups, its leadership would probably abandon some democratic ideals, including local elections.

LEADERSHIP

14. In a UNITA-governed Angola, the existing leadership structures would probably remain intact, with those leaders in the top echelons retaining their positions. UNITA's leadership has been shuffled considerably in the past 3 years; the purpose seems to have been increasing non-Ovimbundu representation at the top in order to attract wider support. The Congress held in November 1984 produced the movement's third chief of staff since 1975, and resulted in the rise of Ernesto Mulato, a Kongo, to the number four position in the Executive Committee. Another significant promotion was that of Antonio Dembo, a Kimbundu, to the number ten position, in which he will direct military mobilization into Kimbundu provinces around Luanda. Dembo also has strong links with Zaire.

15. The Congress also produced a change of names for the two top organs: the Politburo, which became the Executive Committee, and the Central Committee, which became the National Committee. These name changes were most likely precipitated by a desire on the part of UNITA leaders to eliminate any

similarities between UNITA and Marxist-Leninist parties, which normally use those designations, so as to attract Western military and political support.

16. It is likely that UNITA, especially as a ruling party, would remain a potent force without Savimbi. Even though Savimbi is surrounded by a strong personality cult and an almost mystical aura, there are several other personalities in UNITA's leadership who also seem to have key decisionmaking roles and would be qualified to assume the UNITA presidency. Probably the most influential and powerful figure after Savimbi is Secretary General Brigadier Miguel N'Zau Puna, the number two man in the Executive Committee. Puna, a Cabindan, is responsible for the civil administration of the party, as well as for the overall coordination of logistic and communications networks. Like Savimbi, Puna is a superb orator with charisma, intelligence, and a keen sense of humor.

17. Another key figure is Chief of FALA Operations Brigadier Demosthenes Chilingutila, the number seven man on the Executive Committee, who was once, as chief of staff, the effective head of FALA. An Ovimbundu, he was formerly a corporal in the Portuguese artillery in Angola and has made a spectacular rise in the UNITA military hierarchy.

18. Jeremiah Chitunda, UNITA's chief foreign representative based in the United States, is another leading personality in UNITA. Educated in the United States, he is extremely articulate and has built up an extensive network of influential contacts in the United States. Other key personalities are FALA Chief of Staff Alberto Joaquim Vinama and Permanent Secretary of the Executive Tito Chingunji.

MILITARY

19. UNITA's military wing, FALA, is organized in a sophisticated structure along conventional military lines, which would make its transition from insurgent to government force uncomplicated and efficient. FALA has a rank structure similar to that used in most Western armies, with an officer corps ranging from lieutenant to general, and a centralized staff incorporating the functional divisions of operations, intelligence, personnel, and logistics. FALA's high command consists of the supreme commander, Savimbi, and headquarters staff headed by the chief of staff and chiefs of intelligence, personnel, logistics, and operations. The central headquarters is responsible for the overall planning and coordination of the war.

20. UNITA guerrillas are recruited at the age of 18 on an unpaid, voluntary basis and through the intermediary of the traditional chieftains. An average of 1,500 men go through basic training courses every 3 months at boot camps dispersed throughout the bush. Promising recruits, usually those with some form of basic education, go through a second, more specialized training in the communications, intelligence, commando, logistics, and other units. A third training period enables troops with field experience to go through recycling or improvement courses.

21. UNITA's military forces are distributed into five formations based on training level: the militia, guerrilla units, semi-regulars, regulars, and shock commandos. Because the armed forces of a UNITA government would no

longer need guerrilla units, these could be incorporated into conventional ones. However, their highly specialized skills would be useful if a deposed MPLA initiated its own guerrilla war. Although most of UNITA's arsenal now consists of captured Soviet-made weapons or of South African-supplied ones, a ruling UNITA government would probably rely on Western military aid.

22. At present, according to Western estimates, UNITA consists of 30,000 to 45,000 men. The armed forces of a ruling UNITA government would necessarily consist of a significantly larger number of soldiers, certainly enough to ensure the security of the new regime. Most of the new ranks would have to be recruited from among those who would have enlisted in the MPLA armed forces. This recruitment process would probably require no small effort on the part of the new leadership, including the use of propaganda, a mandatory enlistment policy, and sufficient pay to provide incentive. Undoubtedly, the officer corps and other positions of responsibility would consist of those who are presently serving in UNITA's ranks.

23. On a geographical level, UNITA's area of operations is divided in 22 military regions, which in turn are grouped together into 5 military fronts--southern, western, eastern, central, and northern--each headed by a front commander with the rank of colonel or brigadier. The military regions are headed by a regional chief of staff with the rank of lieutenant colonel or colonel. The regions are in turn divided into a number--usually three--of sectors headed by a major, and the sectors then comprise three zones headed by a lieutenant or captain. Minor changes under a ruling UNITA government would probably include an increase in the number of military regions to accommodate the entire country, and, consequently, a larger number of personnel in high military positions.

INTERNAL SECURITY

24. UNITA could come to power under a number of circumstances. The first possibility, a goal stated repeatedly by Savimbi, is that the MPLA government agrees to form a government of national unity with UNITA. Presumably, such a settlement would entail a number of steps. First, a joint political bureau, consisting of the present members of both the MPLA and UNITA ruling structures, might be established, perhaps led by a rotating leadership of current MPLA Chairman Eduardo dos Santos and Savimbi.

25. In this scenario, there would undoubtedly be an attempt made to include in the ruling structure members of all of the country's ethnic groups in order to consolidate the widest support possible. Presumably, democratic elections would be held at some point, perhaps after a year or two when the economy was stabilized following the cessation of the guerrilla war. All foreign troops and military advisers would leave the country.

26. This scenario appears unlikely to be realized because the MPLA government has refused repeatedly to even consider it. Instead, the MPLA has vowed to increase military activities against UNITA with the escalation of Soviet and Cuban military support. In addition, Savimbi has demonstrated his singular-style leadership and predominance over UNITA. It is unlikely that he would be content to remain part of a coalition for long or risk losing his position of leadership in an election, despite his constant advocacy of democratic

politics. It is more probable that Savimbi would usurp as much power and control as possible, much like Mengistu has done in Ethiopia, to ensure his own position of power.

27. In a second scenario, UNITA, with massive US military aid and local popular support, would come to power via military superiority and, ultimately, a coup d'etat. In one version of this scenario, the defeated MPLA is disbanded, an unlikely event in view of the MPLA's long history as a tenacious liberation movement before independence and the importance to the Soviet Union of its Marxist leadership. In a more credible version, the deposed MPLA government forms into a guerrilla movement based in the regions surrounding the capital, Luanda, where it has the most popular support, and in regions previously controlled by UNITA, where the peasants, far from the protection of the government, are most likely to be amenable to whatever force rules the bush.

28. With the continued but greatly reduced military support of the Soviet Union and Cuba, the now-insurgent MPLA would wage a guerrilla war against the Western-supported UNITA government. In the long term, Angola's internal security situation would closely resemble the present one, but with the roles of the MPLA and UNITA reversed. Although the Soviet Union would continue to supply MPLA guerrillas with weapons, supply routes would be greatly restricted because of the UNITA government's control of most, if not all, of the country's ports and airfields.

29. It is possible that with Savimbi in power and their foothold lost in Angola, the Soviets might abandon the MPLA and try to woo Savimbi. This kind of Soviet effort is now being seen in Zimbabwe, where the Soviets are slowly building military ties with Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, whose anti-Soviet sentiment had been fueled by Soviet support of a rival liberation group during the struggle for independence.

30. The FNLA, without the leadership of Holden Roberto who lives in the United States, is now a negligible threat and probably will remain so for the foreseeable future no matter which organization, the MPLA or UNITA, is in power. The same is true for another small insurgent group, the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC).

FOREIGN SUPPORT AND POLICY

32. On the international level, UNITA is gaining increasing support from the United States, particularly among conservative groups, which are attracted by Savimbi's adamant anti-Soviet rhetoric. There also exists an organized network of UNITA support in Western Europe. With permanent representation in Portugal, France, Switzerland, and England, UNITA feeds contacts and public-relations materials to the media and, most important, to sympathetic individuals inside established right-wing parties and political pressure groups. One such group is the Pan-European Union, an ultra-conservative organization supported by reactionary circles among the European nobility, Catholic Church hierarchy, and politicians. A UNITA government would undoubtedly receive material support from all of these sources.

32. Within Africa, Savimbi has a number of friends who would be likely to recognize and support a UNITA government, and who would probably promote acceptance of the latter in the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda, although on good terms with President dos Santos, also is sympathetic to Savimbi. Zambia refused to allow Angolan government troops to attack UNITA positions from Zambian soil during the Cazombo offensive in 1984, and most of UNITA's timber trade goes through Zambia. Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko also helps UNITA significantly, mainly by allowing UNITA to use airfields in the Zairean capital and Shaba Province for the transportation of UNITA officials, journalists, and representatives of the international community who are sympathetic to UNITA into UNITA-controlled territory. In addition, Morocco has been a long-time military friend, and good contacts have been maintained with Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, Egypt, and Somalia.

33. Most important in the regional context, South Africa, by far the most militarily and economically powerful sub-Saharan African country, is an ally. In view of the latter's apartheid policy, although it is difficult to gauge the kind of relationship a UNITA government would have with the South African Government, it is doubtful that Savimbi would reject South African economic and military support that would probably play a major role in keeping UNITA in power. However, in need of the acceptance and support of his other neighbors and the OAU, Savimbi would probably try to be as discreet as possible about his South African ties.

34. UNITA's relationship with Namibia's insurgent group, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), is strained and unlikely to change in the event of either or both organizations' coming to power in their respective countries, the major reason being SWAPO's Marxist orientation and ties to the Soviet Union. UNITA is fearful that a SWAPO government would provide refuge and bases for African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa insurgents, thereby provoking South African military attacks on Namibian territory and a possible Soviet and/or Cuban military presence in Namibia.

35. The ANC's ties to both the South African Communist Party and the Soviet Union, combined with UNITA's ties to the South African Government, do not bode well for any future rapport between a UNITA government and the ANC, whether in power in South Africa or as an insurgent group. On the contrary, Savimbi has expressed his solidarity with the Pan-African Congress (PAC), another South African insurgent group, which is all but impotent.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

36. Angola's major significance to the United States is its relationship with the Soviet Union. In the struggle between the two superpowers for influence in the Third World, UNITA is considered one of the few remaining barriers to Soviet dominance in southern Africa. Of secondary but far less importance are Angola's natural resources, some of which are useful in the US defense industry. In addition, US oil companies are involved in the exploration for oil in Angola, which has the second largest oil reserves in Africa after Nigeria.

37. The survival of the MPLA government implies the continuation of a strong Soviet and Cuban presence to sustain it. Savimbi, on the other hand, is anti-Soviet, friendly to the United States, and supported by a large part of the Angolan population. With Savimbi in power, the United States would thus gain both a significant ally in southern Africa and a counterforce to Soviet expansion in the region.

38. An American-supported UNITA victory could also prove to be a major foreign policy coup for the United States vis-a-vis the issue of Namibian independence. Because South Africa claims that the only impediment to the granting of Namibia's independence is the presence of Cuban troops in Angola, presumably the defeat of the MPLA government and the installation of a pro-Western UNITA government that has demonstrated friendly relations with South Africa would resolve that thorny issue.

39. On the other hand, there are a number of negative implications for the United States in a UNITA victory and American military support of a UNITA government. American friendliness with a UNITA government, which has already established ties with South Africa, could lead to world perception of a US alignment with the South African Government. Such perceptions could harm US relations with many African and other Third World nations that may interpret such a perceived alliance as a reduction of US pressure on South Africa to undertake internal racial reforms.

40. If UNITA does succeed in overthrowing the MPLA government, a massive and long-term US military commitment would be required. In the event that an ousted MPLA launches its own guerrilla war, US military support to UNITA is likely be countered by the Soviet Union and Cuba, continuing their involvement in the southern African region and consequently harming long-term US interests in southern Africa and Soviet-American relations. In addition, far from providing the United States with a bargaining chip against the Soviet Union, US aid to a UNITA government could be so widely criticized as to constitute a major setback for the United States.

41. In the diplomatic area, although the United States has not formally recognized the MPLA government, the latter is not inimical to American interests and has made efforts to improve its relations with the United States. The United States is the MPLA government's largest single trading partner and, reciprocally, Angola is the United States' third largest trade partner in sub-Saharan Africa, after Nigeria and South Africa. US exports to Angola, although not large, are rising, and the United States imports most of the oil produced by Angola's offshore fields, operated by Gulf Oil. The Angolan Government has been scrupulously correct in its dealings with Gulf, even stationing Cuban troops to protect the US concession from UNITA and FLEC attacks. American commercial banks are also heavily invested in Angola, having lent the state oil company, Sonangol, more than \$200 million.

42. It is therefore questionable from an economic viewpoint whether the demise of the MPLA government would have positive implications for the United States. Although Savimbi presents himself as a friend of the United States, his somewhat ambiguous economic proclamations hold no guarantee for the continuation of present economic agreements under a UNITA government.